



STATE OF WASHINGTON

DEPARTMENT OF EARLY LEARNING
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August 25, 2011

Dear Early Learning Leaders,

On your mark, get set, go!

We wanted to let you know that the final RTT-ELC application was released this week. We are officially racing.

This competition represents an unprecedented opportunity for all states to focus on their birth-through-five early learning and development systems. It will assist states in building a more unified approach to supporting young children and their families that increases access and quality and helps ensure that children enter kindergarten with the skills, knowledge, and disposition they need to be successful. In a conference call announcing the application, Joan Lombardi, HHS, and Jacqueline Jones, ED, made clear that the RTT-ELC competition is not about creating new programs in early learning and development, nor maintaining the status quo. It is about raising the bar and demonstrating excellence.

RTT-ELC Final Application

Washington is eligible to compete for up to \$60 million over four years (December 2011 – December 2015). Our application is due to the Department of Education by Wednesday, October 19. This gives us six weeks.

The grant requirements include five priorities:

Priority 1: Absolute Priority: Promoting School Readiness for Children with High Needs

Priority 2: Competitive Preference Priority (10 points): Including all Early Learning and Development Programs in the Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System

Priority 3: Competitive Preference Priority (10 points): Understanding the Status of Children's Learning and Development at Kindergarten Entry

Priority 4: Invitational Priority: Sustaining Program Effects in the Early Elementary Grades

Priority 5: Invitational Priority: Encouraging Private-Sector Support

We are required to address the absolute priority (#1); may earn additional points by addressing the competitive preference priorities (#2 and #3); and, if awarded funds, may apply them towards the invitational priorities (#4 and #5), but do not receive points for addressing them in the application.

Just as the first two rounds of Race to the Top were organized around four assurances, this competition is organized around five key areas of reform:

- A. Successful State Systems (65 points)
- B. High-Quality, Accountable Programs (75 points)
- C. Promoting Early Learning and Development Outcomes for Children (60 points)

- D. A Great Early Childhood Education Workforce (40 points)
- E. Measuring Outcomes and Progress (40 points)

The first two areas, (A) and (B), are referred to as *Core Areas* and applicants are required to respond to all selection criteria. The reform areas in (C), (D), and (E) are referred to as *Focused Investment Areas*, whereby applicants may select from a menu of sub-criteria to choose activities relevant to the state's context. Applicants are required to address all five Focused Investment Areas but not all of the selection criteria in each area. The Focused Investment Areas represents a major change as compared to the draft executive summary released in July. It gives states more flexibility to address selection criteria they would like to focus on.

Looking Ahead

We will continue full-steam ahead with the foundational tasks we've begun and work expeditiously to move from foundation building to strategy development and completing the application. In the coming weeks we will focus on:

- Finalizing Grant Strategy, including Selection Criteria: We have outlined our draft theory of change and core strategies in previous newsletters. These were developed based on the great feedback we received from many of you throughout the summer. We will now focus our grant strategy to ensure we are building the strongest possible application.
- The Focused Investment Areas will give states more flexibility to address selection criteria they would like to focus on. We'll be convening this group again to share details about the proposal we're developing and to seek the group's feedback. Notification will go out shortly.
- Support Letters: Strong support letters are a required component of our grant application. Collectively, the letters must reflect broad concerted support for our State Plan. To this end, we have begun reaching out to key partners to flesh out accomplishments and discuss how each can stand in support of these efforts. We held several webinars to provide information on creating a great letter of support. Our Letter of Support Toolkit is available on our [webpage](#). We would love to hear from you or your organization if you are interested in helping with a support letter. Please email RTT-ELC@del.wa.gov.

To organize our application, we request that you submit final letters of support by Friday, October 7. If you would like feedback on your letter, please send it to us by Monday, September 19.

I'd like to again express my thanks for all your support and contributions as we continue this race. Please continue to let us know what you think and send any suggestions you have to RTT-ELC@del.wa.gov. Please continue to check our [webpage](#) for new information, including links to the final application documents.

Sincerely,



Bette M. Hyde, Ph.D
Director